



AXE TO GRIND: The road outside Mahalakshmi temple in Konavaikalpalayam near Podanur in the city where trees were felled on Thursday in Coimbatore.

Indiscriminate felling of trees curbed by green NGO

Nandhu Sundaram | TNN

Coimbatore: Seven trees lined up for cutting in front of a roadside temple in Konavaikalpalayam on the outskirts of the city has once again kicked off a storm. Members of Inthinai Pasumai Kappagam, an environmental organisation consisting of city youth, informed the authorities. Soon, the village administration officer arrived at the scene and prevented the trees from being cut. A few trees which were already cut for the temple festival will not be sold by locals. The government will now sell them in a public auction.

G Vijayan, former AIADMK councillor, who spoke on behalf of the residents of Konavaikalpalayam said that people were unaware about the rules involving the cutting of trees. His opinion did not sit well with the activ-

ists, who said that the temple festival was only a pretext to sell the trees for a profit.

The struggle by green activists in the city comes against the backdrop of a similar struggle in the formation of a Tree Protection Committee. K Mohan Raj, secretary, Save Coimbatore Wetlands, who first mooted the idea is happy to see it finally taking shape. "It is enough if the right people find a place within the panel," he told *The Times of India*.

There is ire among activists that many of them were not even consulted in the process of forming the Tree Protection Committee. "There are so many of us who are genuinely fighting for the cause of protecting trees. But the government officials can see none of us. Repeatedly, Siruthuli and RAAC are being chosen ahead of everyone else to sit

on such panels," said Karpagam.

"There exists in Coimbatore a situation in which environmental groups selectively protest the cutting of trees. When trees are cut in certain areas by certain groups of people, it is deliberately ignored. Only if people who really worked for the cause are included in the panel can trees be protected," M Yoganathan, president, Save Coimbatore Wetlands, said.

When discussed, Vanitha Mohan, who heads Siruthuli said she was more than happy to meet anyone to discuss the issue. "There is very little time and we have submitted a list of five names. I am not on the list. But these five will not be permanent members. More people will be invited to sit on the committee soon. I wasn't aware of the discord among activists," she said.

